

# *preservation* issues

NEWS FOR THE PRESERVATION COMMUNITY

MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROGRAM

★ Vol. 1, No. 5 ★

## Kansas City Parks Survey Nears Completion

A two-year landscape architectural/historic survey of Kansas City's parks and boulevards system is nearing completion. Funded by Historic Preservation Fund grants (in 1990 and 1991) to the Kansas City Parks Commission, the survey was conducted by the New York planning firm of Tourbier & Walmsley, Inc. with Theis Doolittle and Art Historical Research, both of Kansas City.

The majority of the parks and boulevards covered in this comprehensive report were envisioned and planned by George Kessler who both guided and coordinated Kansas City's urban growth in the late 19th and early 20th century. As a result of Kessler's brilliance, Kansas City has a legacy of landscape architecture and design that rivals that of any city in the country.

George Edward Kessler (1862-1923) was a landscape architect of extraordinary insight and practical ability. He was not only a pioneer in city planning for Kansas City, Missouri, but his achievements became an inspiration for the development of parks and boulevards throughout the United States. A follower of the pastoral naturalistic style, Kessler was one of the first great landscape architects working in the Midwest to depart from the formal plan of civic landscape development.

A native of Bad Frankenhausen, Germany, Kessler moved to Hoboken, New Jersey with his family in 1865. After graduation from a Dallas, Texas high school in 1878, Kessler returned to Germany where, for four years, he attended classes at Weimar, the University of Jena, and the Neue Garten in Potsdam, combining courses in landscape gardening, botany, and engineering.

Kessler's success as superintendent of Merriam Park in Kansas (beginning in 1882) brought him to the attention of the Kansas City Board of Park and Boulevard Commissioners, who appointed him

secretary and engineer. Kessler held this position until 1902 and served as a consultant to the Board until his death in 1923.

Kessler's plan for Kansas City was perhaps the first park and boulevard system built as an interconnected design to serve an entire city, planned to adapt to and enhance the existing topography and forestation. Kessler began his plan to make use of the diversified topography and natural beauty of Kansas City by issuing a comprehensive parks and boulevard program on October 12, 1893, which also provided a framework for future city development. William H. Wilson, author of the recently reprinted *The City Beautiful Movement in Kansas City*, remarks, "... it was vastly more than a plea for parks. Instead, it was a detailed and comprehensive look at Kansas City's topography, traffic patterns, population density and growth, its industrial and residential sections, and its prospects for future development. It was in a word, planning."

Included in Kessler's original report was the plan to convert blighted areas into Penn Valley Park, West Terrace Park, and North Terrace Park (now Kessler Park). The most ornamental feature of this original park and boulevard plan was the Paseo, a dual boulevard extending for nine blocks through the city. As an area filled with magnificent floral patterns, trees, shrubs, fountains, and a pergola, the Paseo became one of the most important and unique areas of the whole plan, and a passage (paseo) from Parade Park to the entire boulevard system. And, by the 1920s, as a result of Kessler's great planning and foresight, Kansas City's park and boulevard system had become internationally recognized.

While engaged in design affairs in Kansas City, Kessler was also involved in numerous projects throughout the United States. In 1900, he moved to St. Louis







George  
Edward  
Kessler  
1862-1923

briefly to direct landscaping for the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, then again in 1902 to design the World's Fair. His genius in planning took him to Memphis, Cincinnati, Baltimore, Cleveland, Wichita Falls, and Dallas. In addition, Kessler was a consultant to planning commissions for several cities including Syracuse, Denver, Indianapolis, and Dallas.

The scope of Kessler's career and his importance as an innovative landscape architect and city planner is truly difficult to summarize. As one of the founders of the American Institute of Planners in 1917 (which began in Kansas City) and one of the original members of the Commission of Fine Arts appointed by President Roosevelt, Kessler's influence is felt in a number of aesthetic areas and has affected the lives of generations of Americans. —  
*Cyd Millstein*

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September/October 1991



**Deputy  
State  
Historic  
Preservation  
Officer**

On June 21, 1991, Governor Ashcroft signed into law a landmark piece of preservation legislation, Senate Bill 124. The bill heralds a new era for preservation in Missouri by providing critical enabling authority for historic preservation activity at the state and local level.

Sections 1 through 4 of the bill, cited as the "State Historic Preservation Act," refer to the authority of the Department of Natural Resources to carry out historic preservation activities. The roles of the department director as State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) and the Historic Preservation Program director as Deputy SHPO are clarified. The act authorizes the department to carry out basic preservation activities pursuant to the National Historic Preservation Act (P.L. 89-665, as amended): statewide survey to identify historic properties; nominations to the National Register of Historic Places; comprehensive historic preservation planning; Historic Preservation Fund grant administration; Certified Local Government assistance; federal project review; and public information and education. The act also clarifies the department's role in administering the Historic Preservation Revolving Fund, the Missouri Main Street Program, and unmarked human burial sites. The act essentially provides a strong legislative mandate for historic preservation activity within state government.

Sections 5 through 7 of the bill, known as the "Local Historic Preservation Act,"

provide equally important authority for historic preservation activities at the local level. For purposes of this act, local government includes "each city, town, village and each county regardless of class . . ." The act empowers local governments to create historic preservation ordinances and to establish historic preservation commissions. Such commissions shall have the power to: conduct local surveys to identify significant historic properties; recommend designation of significant historic properties as historic landmarks and historic districts; establish guidelines for the review of projects affecting designated landmarks and districts; review projects affecting designated landmarks and properties within historic districts; provide technical assistance to owners of historic properties; make recommendations on historic preservation policies and incentives to the local governing body; prepare preservation planning documents; participate in other land use activities affecting landmarks and historic districts; and acquire fee title or lesser interest, such as easements, in designated properties. The act provides authority for the involvement of all Missouri local governments - counties as well as municipalities - in historic preservation. It reinforces the vague reference to historic preservation found under existing zoning law (RSMo 89.020 and .040) by explicitly granting local governments the power to enact preservation ordinances and to empower preservation commissions with fundamental preservation authority.

Successful passage of this law, in 1991,

is due to the leadership of Senator Harry Wiggins, who introduced the bill; House sponsor Representative Tom Hoppe; to our committed roster of Certified Local Governments, who believe as we do that the future of effective preservation is at the local level; and to friends of preservation throughout the state. We applaud the efforts of all of those whose support made the difference. - *Claire Blackwell*

**Certified  
Local  
Government**

Plans for two 1991 local government conferences are well underway. Designed for members of preservation commissions, city staff, and local preservation organizations, the conferences will be held in Liberty November 9 and in St. Louis December 6.

Both conferences will deal with the dynamics of preservation crisis management, effective advocacy, lobbying, and negotiated solutions. Highlight of the St. Louis meeting will be a speech by Mayor Joe Riley of Charleston, South Carolina.

Brochures for both conferences will be mailed this fall. To reserve a copy, or for more information, write or call Judith Deel, Local Government Coordinator at (314) 751-7862. - *Judith Deel*

**Historic  
Preservation  
Fund  
Grants**

Several additional fiscal year 1991 Historic Preservation Fund (HPF) matching grants have recently been awarded:

- Bonnets Mill Community Betterment Association - \$6,727 for a comprehensive architectural survey of the Bonnets Mill community;

- City of Fayette - \$7,500 for an architectural/historic survey of approximately 70 significant properties;

- Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education - \$15,000 to develop a Missouri Heritage curriculum;

- Missouri Downtown Development Association - \$38,200 to provide architectural/technical preservation assistance to owners of downtown properties in Main Street pilot towns; and

- Southwest Missouri State University - \$8,915 to hold Missouri's 7th Annual Preservation Conference in Springfield April 4-5, 1992.

For more information about Missouri's HPF grant program call (314) 751-5376 or write Jerald Stepenoff, Grants Manager. - *Jerald Stepenoff*



Department of Natural Resources staff and other "Preservation Act" supporters gathered recently as Governor John Ashcroft (seated, center) signed Senate Bill 124. The bill provides important enabling authority for state, county, and municipal preservation activity. Senator Harry Wiggins, who introduced the bill, is standing left of the governor, with House sponsor Tom Hoppe at right. Standing in the background are (left to right) Tracy Mehar, Jo Ann Radetic, Mark Miles, Wayne Gross, Claire Blackwell, Marjorie Cox, Jane Flynn, Jack Luer, Lance Carlson, and Kevin Mullally.



## Archaeology Profiles

This summer marks the 9th field season for the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair Archaeological Project. The purpose of the project is to salvage and record the cultural artifacts discarded at the close of this turn-of-the-century universal exposition attended by 20 million people.

After intensive surface survey and mapping was completed with the assistance of students from Washington University, students from the Mark Twain Summer Institute's archaeology course opened four test pits the first summer. Three of these have continued to produce an abundance of historic cultural materials including fragments of decorative glass and imported ceramics, metal fragments, decorative architectural building details and statue fragments of "staff" (plaster of Paris mixed with fibers) which comprised "the gleaming white city" that consisted of 1,500 structures and covered much of the Fair's 1,275 acres in Forest Park.

Field operations were designed to salvage materials from the Fair's construction



A plaster staff detail from a 1904 St. Louis World's Fair building was unearthed by students at a Forest Park archaeological excavation site.

as well as souvenir fragments and items of daily use. Soil screening has enabled the retrieval of small beads, buttons, shoe eyelets, and a variety of seeds (plants were brought by many of the 62 nations that participated).

Among the more unusual items

recovered were celluloid shirt collars, a jar of cold cream (with contents), a wire puzzle game, and pieces of high button shoes. Over 5,000 artifacts have been retrieved and quantified.

The four test pits, located within a 50x50 meter area, have produced distinctive artifact categories defining individual deposit areas. An impressive sampling of diagnostic materials are included in a permanent exhibit at the History Museum (Missouri Historical Society) in the Jefferson Memorial Building in Forest Park. The exhibit, which opened August 1988, is entitled "Places in the Park," and traces the conception and construction of this famous world's fair, one of the largest and most successful (and the largest earthmoving endeavor previous to the construction of the Panama Canal).

This project is under the direction of archaeologist Carol Diaz-Granados, Field and Lab Supervisor. It is carried out each summer through the Mark Twain Summer Institute with additional backing from the St. Louis Academy of Science and under contract with the City of St. Louis and the St. Louis Department of Parks, Recreation, and Forestry. — *Carol Diaz-Granados*

## MISSOURI HISTORIC ARCHITECTURE

### *Pergolas (ca. 1900-1940)*

#### Characteristics:

- Usually one of two basic types: the pergola-porch which is attached to a building; or the pergola-arbor which is freestanding.
- Open wooden-framed roof, rafters with decorative rafter ends in various styles.
- Massive, regularly spaced columns (square or round/wood or stone) support the roof structure; column styles may be classical or rustic.
- Floor is masonry: stone, brick, or concrete.
- Often covered with vines: wisteria, honeysuckle, and grapevines are typical, or climbing roses.

PHOTO GERALD LEE GILLEARD



A pergola with connecting garden houses and gazebos was designed by George Edward Kessler as the centerpiece of North Terrace (now Kessler) Park in Kansas City.

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Editor: Karen Grace  
Designer: Musick & Co.



## Route 66 Signage

More than 300 signs marking the path of historic U.S. Highway 66 in Missouri were installed recently by the Missouri State Highway and Transportation Department or local jurisdictions across the state from St. Louis to Joplin. Route 66 was designated an historic highway in Missouri last year under legislation initiated by the Route 66 Association of Missouri and cosponsored by former State Representative J. Dan Woodall, State Representative Jim Mitchell, and State Senator John Russell.

An honorary designation, Missouri's Route 66 legislation specified that no state monies could be used to construct or erect signs, but allowed the highway department to accept contributions for this purpose. Funding for the signs was raised through the joint efforts of the Association, 25 communities, and 10 counties along the route.

The signs replicate the original U.S. Highway Route 66 markers and conform to the standard brown signs used nationwide for marking historic routes and trails. The posting of the signs is an important first step toward the long-term preservation of the historic highway in Missouri, the "birthplace" of Route 66.

The Route 66 Association of Missouri is a nonprofit organization formed to preserve, promote, and develop old Route 66 in Missouri. For further information, write:

Route 66 Association of Missouri  
P.O. Box 8117  
St. Louis, MO 63156

## preservation issues

Missouri Department of Natural Resources  
Historic Preservation Program  
P.O. Box 176  
Jefferson City, MO 65102

## Dates to Remember

**Historic Preservation Fund Grant Informational Meeting** September 4, 1:30-5:00 p.m. in Jefferson City. For more information call (314) 751-5376.

**Northside Preservation Commission 10th Annual Awards Banquet and Meeting** September 14 in Clayton. For more information call (314) 367-6668.

**The 13th Mid-America Conference on History** September 19-21 in Springfield. Write Department of History, Southwest Missouri State University, Springfield, MO 65804.

**Second Annual Route 66 Motor Tour St. Louis to Joplin** September 21-22. For more information call Jim Powell (314) 539-5500.

**Historic Kansas City Foundation Weekend of Walking Tours** October 12-13 in Kansas City. For more information call (816) 471-3391.

**Oral History Association Annual Meeting** October 15-18 in Cleveland, Ohio. For more information call (216) 743-5934.

**The 45th National Preservation Conference** October 16-20, San Francisco. For information contact Preservation Conferences at the National Trust 1 (800) YES-NTHP.

**American Society of Landscape Architects Annual Meeting** October 19-22, Kansas City, celebrates the 100th anniversary of Kansas City's parks system. For information or a conference brochure FAX (202) 686-1001 or call (202) 686-ASLA.

**Missouri Advisory Council on Historic Preservation Meeting** November 8 in Jefferson City. For more information call (314) 751-5365.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICERS	25	NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES 1966-1991
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